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UNH To Establish Organic Dairy Farm

Gift from Stonyfield Farm Helps Launch First-ever Organic Dairy Farm at U.S. Land-Grant University

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DURHAM, N.H. – The University of New Hampshire will establish an organic dairy farm for research, education, and outreach, making it the nation's first land-grant university to have an organic dairy farm.

Londonderry, N.H. industry leader Stonyfield Farm has made a \$200,000 leadership gift to the project, which carries an estimated price tag of \$1.5 million.

“UNH has a remarkable opportunity to provide much-needed research and education to organic dairy farmers, present and future, while helping to secure the future of the northeast region's farming heritage and rural communities,” said William Trumble, dean of UNH's College of Life Sciences and Agriculture (COLSA). “As consumer demand for organic products rises – outpacing supply, in the case of dairy – the time is appropriate for UNH to provide leadership in organic dairy education and research.”

“This project represents completion of a full circle for Stonyfield Farm,” said Gary Hirshberg, President and CE-Yo. “Nearly 24 years ago, Stonyfield Farm Yogurt was launched as a project of the rural education center, a small New Hampshire school created to help teach farmers new organic farming methods. Now we are proud to provide our largest single grant ever to the University of New Hampshire to continue the critical work of teaching the next generation of farmers. This could not come at a better time, as the organic dairy market in general and New England in particular are in need of more organic farmers.”

“The organic dairy will build on UNH's long-standing commitment to New Hampshire's agricultural roots as well as our reputation as a leader in animal and dairy science and sustainability,” said UNH President Ann Weaver Hart. “We are grateful to Stonyfield Farm for helping this project come to fruition.”

The new research dairy farm, located on a 200-acre parcel of certified-organic land at the university's Burley-Demeritt Farm in Lee, N.H., will begin operation in December 2005 with the acquisition of 50 to 60 Jersey heifers. Construction of a composting-bedded pack barn and milking center, as well as acquisition of equipment and installation of fencing, will occur in summer 2006, and organic hay and baleage were harvested for this winter's feed. This ambitious timeline allows for certified organic milk production to begin in December 2006.

The farm will serve as both an applied research center for integrated organic production and management and an education center for organic dairy farmers, farmers undergoing or considering transition to organic, and students of sustainable agriculture.

Responding to a growing need by farmers for science-based research to support organic dairy efforts, the project will be directed by a 20-person advisory board that includes eight dairy farmers from New England, New York and Pennsylvania. Veterinarians, grazing consultants, and a nutritionist also sit on the board, which will play a key role in setting the research agenda of the farm.

Working in partnership with Stonyfield, UNH is leveraging the organic yogurt maker's gift to raise additional funds. The project also has secured a significant gift from a retired conventional New Hampshire dairy farm couple toward the purchase of dairy cattle for the farm; and Hubbard, LLC donated feed mixing and processing equipment.

UNH is already involved in a larger New England university effort to offer more research-based information to a growing organic dairy and feed industry. A recent \$829,000 United States Department of Agriculture grant, awarded jointly to UNH and the University of Maine, charges researchers at both institutions with studying ways to reduce New England dairies' reliance upon imported grains. Rotational grazing of the animals and research on grazing and feeding options will be a focus of the organic dairy farm.

UNH is one of the nation's top-tier land-, space-, and sea-grant universities. The university maintains its commitment to agriculture and food systems with strong programs in life sciences and agriculture. Facilities include the Fairchild Conventional Dairy Teaching and Research Center, an equine farm, a miniature swine unit at Burley-Demeritt Farm, five greenhouses, and an organic garden. UNH is also a higher education leader in sustainability, with projects ranging from a new highly efficient co-generation power plant and alternative fuels for campus vehicles to a program that composts food waste from campus dining halls and local eateries and an emerging interdisciplinary center focusing on the state's food security.

Stonyfield Farm (www.stonyfield.com), celebrating its 23rd year, is the world's largest organic yogurt manufacturer, and produces all natural and organic yogurt, smoothies, cultured soy, frozen yogurt, ice cream and milk. The company advocates that healthy food can only come from a healthy planet. It was the nation's first dairy processor to pay farmers not to treat cows with the synthetic bovine growth hormone rBGH. Stonyfield donates 10 percent of its profits to environmental causes; was America's first manufacturer to offset 100 percent of its CO2 emissions from its facility energy use; and recently installed the fifth largest solar array in New England to help power its production plant - all efforts to reduce global warming.